

The Sword & The Plow

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Commentary on Matthew Chapter Five, vv.1-20

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1 – And seeing the multitudes,

Viz., those mentioned in Matt. 4:24, 25, who had heard his fame and came from the surrounding region bringing their sick and lame to be healed, and followed him about.

he went up into

We are not told why the presence of the multitudes prompted the Lord to ascend a mountain, but are left to infer the reason from the surrounding circumstances. Taken in isolation, Matthew's account suggests the Lord sought an advantageous place to teach, perhaps where there was an empty place or natural amphitheater that

would facilitate the audience hearing him. However, read in conjunction with Mark and Luke, we find that the Lord repaired to the mountain with some of his disciples, where he spent night in prayer, and the following morning “ordained twelve to be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach” (Mk. 3:13, 14; Luke 6:12-49). Hence, it appears that Jesus ascended the mountain in preparation for choosing the twelve. However, not being able to be hid, the multitude found him the next day, when he then delivered the Sermon on the Mount (*cf.* Matt. 15:29).

a mountain:

The translators have rendered this “a mountain,” *viz.*, no special mountain, just one near the place they were at. However, the Greek uses the definite article to ὄρος “the mountain,” seeming to signify a distinct mountain; *viz.*, one that was familiar to the disciples (cf. Matt. 15:29-39). Tradition assigns this to Karn Hattin (the “Horns of Hattin”), the only height rising above the hills surrounding the shores of Lake Gennesaret, about five miles to the west. This mountain is named for the village now at its base and for the two horns that crown its summit, separated by a level place in between, which could have accommodated the multitudes that followed Christ. It also corresponds with Luke’s description of a level place or plain (τοπουπεδινου) where the Sermon on the Mount was delivered (Lk. 6:17).



Karn Hattin, traditional location of the Sermon on the Mount

and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.

Luke says that when he had chosen the twelve, “he came down with them, and stood in the plain” where there was the company of his disciples and a great multitude, and thus proceeded to teach them (Lk. 6:17). Sitting was the traditional posture assumed for teaching, and

was therefore a sign for the disciples to gather around to receive instruction.

2 – And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

The Sermon on the Mount is the greatest single lesson ever delivered. It consists of only about 2,600 words and was delivered extemporaneously. Yet, its depth and profundity can scarcely be fathomed, or its treasure exhausted. The sermon stands in testimony to the Lord’s divinity and the inspiration of the scriptures, for such words could not otherwise have issued from the mouth of man.

The Beatitudes

Verses three through twelve contain what are commonly called the “beatitudes,” from the Latin *beatus* (happy, blessed) and *tudo* (a suffix indicating a state or condition). The word rendered “blessed” is not εὐλογημένον (blessed by God, Matt. 25:34), but μακαριόν (happy, blessed) – “If ye know these things, happy are ye if you do them” (Jn. 13:17).

3 - Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

This verse is the first of several pronouncing conditions or circumstances “happy” that are normally deemed undesirable or bad. The world measures happiness by the external conditions of this life; the spiritual man gages happiness by the inward condition of the soul. The present life is but fleeting, and external circumstances are subject to alteration. True happiness can only be realized inwardly, in the spirit, where man meets with God and humble subjection to his will carries the joy of a clear conscience and the promise of eternal reward. However, the poor are not inherently virtuous, nor does poverty recommend us to God. But, when mixed with faith, poverty fosters humble dependence upon God, which is advantageous to man’s salvation. “*Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth*” (1 Tim. 5:5,

6). Indeed, the gospel's appeal is such that the poor are more apt to respond than the rich: *"Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (Jm. 2:5; cf. Rev. 2:9)*. This is not to say material wealth is inherently evil. It is to say, however, that wealth tends to foster worldliness, to blunt spiritual zeal, and to distract us from pursuit of heaven, and is therefore generally disadvantageous. *"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition (I Tim. 6:9)* The care of the world and deceitfulness of riches are among the things Jesus said "choke the word," rendering it unfruitful (Matt. 13:22). Thus, where the world loathes poverty, scripture teaches us to view it favorably, as helping to cast us upon God and to place our treasure in things above. Even so, in the final analysis it is not to external circumstances or worldly poverty that the Lord here refers when he mentions the poor, but to the poor *in spirit*; to those who feel inwardly the desolation of the soul apart from God; to those impressed with their mortality and their utter lack of self-sufficiency; to those who see themselves as so completely devoid of spiritual merit that they can do no more than smite upon their breasts and say "God be merciful to me the sinner" (Lk. 18:13). This sort of poverty can be felt even by the rich. Solomon, at life's end, having surveyed the greatness of his wealth and possessions, declaimed the poverty of riches, saying, *"All was vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 2:11)*, and there was nothing better than to *"fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man" (Eccl. 12:13)*. For the poor of this description, Christ promises the kingdom of heaven as their abiding possession. Cf. Matt. 11:5 – *"The poor have the gospel preached to them."*

4 - Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Those that mourn must necessarily include the poor in spirit (v. 3). To feel the soul's desolation; to understand man's inherent fallenness and

moral depravity; to suffer the pangs of conscience and shame and mortification for sin is to mourn one's hopeless estate. However, it was the Messiah's special mission to "comfort all that mourn" by proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself:

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified." Isa. 61:1-3

The historical context of these verses and those that follow (Isa. 61:6-9) looked to the return from the Assyrio-Babylonian captivity (*"they shall build the old wastes, and they shall raise up the former desolations" – v.4*). The return of the captives from the Assyrio-Babylonian captivity, like the exodus from Egypt before it, was but a prophetic type anticipating the salvation of the Messiah. The captives languishing under bondage to sin would be saved by the cross of Christ. Christ comforts those that mourn by proclaiming remission of their sins and sending the Comforter into their hearts, the Spirit of adoption, testifying that they are sons of God and heirs of eternal life.

5 - Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Isaiah's prophecy that Christ would comfort those who mourn for their sins, also says that Christ was anointed to preach "good tidings to the meek" (Isa. 61:1). The meek are the little

flock of God; the gentle and lowly people who wait upon the Lord; the people of faith who down through the centuries had been crushed and oppressed by the world powers and civil authorities over and around them. As previously noted (v. 4, *supra*), the historical context of Isaiah's prophecy was the return from the Assyrio-Babylonian captivity. Two verses earlier (Isa. 60:21), the prophet said God's people "would inherit the land;" again almost certainly in reference to the return from captivity (*cf.* Isa. 61:3). The complete phrase used by Jesus here "*the meek shall inherit the earth*" (or land) occurs in Ps. 37:11. The meaning in both places is that, although the wicked were then in power, God's people would receive dominion and so possess the earth. This was the essence of the promise to Abraham that his seed would possess the gate of its enemies (Gen. 22:17; *cf.* Lk. 1:73, 74); it was also the subject of various Psalms (Ps. 72) and prophecies, particularly the kingdom prophecies of Daniel chapters two and seven, both of which unmistakably place the coming of the kingdom in the days of the Roman Empire.

"And the kingdom and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." Dan. 7:27

Jesus told the disciples that the kingdom would come in power during their lifetimes (Matt. 16:27, 28; Mk. 8:38; 9:1). He repeated this assertion at his trial before the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:64; Mk. 14:62). It began to be fulfilled in the events of A.D. 66-70, the Year of Four Emperors and the destruction of Jerusalem, when Christ put his enemies and the persecutors of the church beneath his feet. By A.D. 313 Christianity was the religion of Emperor Constantine and received official endorsement; by A.D. 380 it was the official religion of the Roman Empire.

6 - Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

The use of hunger and thirst to describe the soul's craving for God and his salvation is common in scripture. Mary's song describes the Lord's provision for the poor in spirit who hunger for salvation, saying, "*He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away*" (Lk. 1:53). The Psalmist wrote "*As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*" (Ps. 42:1, 2) The Greek word rendered "righteousness" here is δικαιοσυνη and bespeaks moral rectitude and the condition of being right with God. However, since all men are subject to human fallenness and moral corruption, the righteousness craved for can never properly be our own, but must be imputed by God.

"For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Rom. 4:2-5

The righteousness the ungodly lack is imputed by God in a judicial act of justification and acquittal from sin, based upon the sacrifice of Christ "*who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*" (Rom. 4:25).

7 - Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

The mercy contemplated here is not confined so much to forgiveness or leniency, though certainly these are included, as it is the overall disposition to show acts of kindness to those destitute of help. The Good Samaritan showed

mercy to the man who fell among the robbers (Lk. 10:37); the two blind men besought Jesus' help, saying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us" (Matt. 9:27; cf. 15:22; 17:15). Those who show mercy shall thus receive mercy of the Lord:

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. 25:37-40

8 - Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

The heart is the seat of the affections ("For where you treasure is, there will your heart be also - Matt. 6:21), and understanding ("For this people's heart is waxed gross...lest they should understand with the heart" etc. - Matt. 13:15), and serves as that which prompts human word and action ("For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" - Matt. 15:19). To be pure is to be free from contaminates, dilution, or admixture. A pure heart is sincere, and free of duplicity, striving for holiness and complete submission to the will of God. Yet, the prophet Jeremiah says "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: Who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). How can the heart of unregenerate man be pure or holy except it first be converted by the word and Spirit of God? Therefore, the pure in heart are those who sense their sinfulness and yield to the gospel of Christ, which urges men to faith and repentance; whose affections are set on things above, not on earth; who weary themselves striving against the flesh, and who yearn to see God. The saying in this verse seems to be derived from Ps. 24:3, 4: "Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in

his holy place: He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart." The "hill of the Lord" is not Zion, but heaven itself, of which Zion was but a type. Thus, when Psalm two says of Jesus "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Ps. 2:6), it refers to Christ's resurrection and ascension (Acts 13:33). Jesus is not merely repeating the promise of eternal life; he is announcing that it is near to being fulfilled. With several other Beatitudes, this saying is essentially eschatological, and anticipates the work of Christ upon the cross and the coming salvation from the power of sin and death.

9 - Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

It is the nature of fallen man to quarrel, strive, and fight ("For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" I Cor. 3:3; cf. Jm. 4:1, 2). Peace follows the gospel of Christ and obedience to the will of God. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (Jm. 3:18). The coming of Christ thus promised bring the world theretofore unprecedented peace:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Isa. 2:2-4; cf. Isa. 11

This passage does not promise universal peace among the nations. Christ rules the nations with a rod of iron, and this invariably entails wrath

upon those that refuse the gospel (*cf.* Ps. 2:8, 9; 110). Indeed, Isaiah's prophecy indicates as much when it says Christ would "*judge among the nations and rebuke many peoples.*" War is a rebuke and visitation from God. God had promised the Jews *rest from war* as a reward of their obedience (Josh. 21:44, 45). However, for their disobedience in failing to drive out the heathen, God left some of the nations to *teach* the children of Israel war; *viz.*, to chasten them for being slack to obey his will (Judges 2:1-5; 3:1, 2). Hence "not learning war" signifies the rest that follows his blessing upon those that obey his will. The "law" and "word of the Lord," which were to go forth out of Zion and Jerusalem, is the gospel of Christ (Lk. 24:46, 47). In suffering Christ's rebuke, the nations are chastened and submit to the gospel and thus find peace. Those who labor to spread the gospel, God acknowledges as sons (υιοι).

10 - Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The peacemakers who labor in the gospel face resistance from wicked and unbelieving men, who persecute God's little flock. In every generation, good is opposed by evil. The enemy is overcome only by the faithful's willingness to suffer for Christ. Belief that temporal loss is compensated by eternal bliss allows the faithful to persevere among their persecutions, knowing they have a reward in heaven. They shrink not from confrontation, but engage the enemy, which flees like darkness before light. And if they suffer wrath, it is but for a moment, and is more than rewarded by God, who receives them into eternal habitations.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not see: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." II Cor. 4:17, 18

11 - Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Jesus now adds to suffering for righteousness sake, suffering for *his sake*. Even while the Lord was alive, the rulers of the Jews decided to punish those who confessed Jesus by casting them out of the synagogue (Jn. 9:22, 34; 12:42; 16:2). To be cast out of the synagogue meant the loss of all civil rights and complete social and economic isolation. In Ezra, we read that excommunication was also accompanied by forfeiture of all one's substance, presumably meaning his paternal lands and chattels (Ezra 10:8). The epistle to the Hebrews describes the suffering heaped upon believers by the Jews, calling them to perseverance in the knowledge that they have a reward in heaven, and that Christ would shortly appear in vengeance upon the Jewish nation. Believers could persevere not only because of the reward, but because if they renounced Christ or yielded to their persecutors, they, too, would become objects of wrath:

"But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Heb. 10:32-39

12 - Rejoice, and be exceeding glad:

The phrase, “rejoice and be exceeding glad” (ἠγαλλισθετε και αγαλλιασθε), is used to describe the joy of the saints at the marriage of the Lamb after the time of eschatological persecution had passed (Rev. 19:7). Marriage is a figure used to describe God’s covenant relationship with his people (Rom. 7:1-4). In the Old Testament, the people were betrothed to God at Sinai (Jer. 2:2); the consummation of the nuptials occurred when the glory of God filled the tabernacle, and he was seen to dwell among the people (Ex. 40:34). In the New Testament, the betrothal occurred beginning at Pentecost (II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 2:21, 22; 5:25-27), and was consummated when the church and canon of the New Testament were complete, and Christ returned to cohabit with his bride at the end of the pre-messianic age (Matt. 24:3; Rev. 21:3, 9). The phrase describes the completion of their joy, first, by salvation from their enemies, then by receipt of eternal life.

for great is your reward

Although in principle the words of Jesus are applicable for all time, yet they had especial relevance for the first generation of believers. The early church passed through great tribulation and persecution, first at the hands of the Jews, then Nero and the Romans. But their suffering was not unnoticed by the Savior: Christ was revealed from heaven in the world-events marked by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Roman civil wars, redeeming the saints from the hands of their enemies. The saints could take joy in their sufferings knowing that these were small compared to the reward of the inheritance at life’s end.

“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty

angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.” II Thess. 1:4-10

in heaven:

Various writers, both ancient and modern, have supposed that there is to be a wondrous regeneration of the earth and cosmos, which will be inhabited by the saints in the resurrection. Some assign this to the millennium; others to the end and consummation. The notion of a regenerated earth as a habitation of man in the resurrection is based on a misreading of the Apocalypse and various Old Testament prophets, especially Isaiah and Ezekiel. For example, Isaiah describes the nations of men under the gospel, which leave off their barbarous, piratical, and war-like demeanors, under the figure of wild animals becoming gentle and tame (Isa. 11:1-9). Yet, mistaking the figurative and poetic nature of the language, men have supposed the very creation itself is to be marvelously reordered. Lactantius (A.D. 260-330) could thus write:

“But He, when He shall have destroyed unrighteousness, and executed His great judgment, and shall have recalled to life the righteous, who have lived from the beginning, will be engaged among men a thousand years, and will rule them with most just command...Then they who shall be alive in their bodies shall not die, but during those thousand years shall produce an infinite multitude, and their offspring shall be holy, and beloved by God; but they who shall be raised from the dead shall preside over the living as judges...About the same time also the prince of the devils, who is the contriver of all evils, shall be bound with chains, and shall be imprisoned during the thousand years of the heavenly rule in which righteousness shall reign in the

world, so that he may contrive no evil against the people of God...Throughout this time beasts shall not be nourished by blood, nor birds by prey; but all things shall be peaceful and tranquil. Lions and calves shall stand together at the manger, the wolf shall not carry off the sheep, the hound shall not hunt for prey; hawks and eagles shall not injure; the infant shall play with serpents.”¹

However, Jesus makes very clear that the reward of the inheritance is *in heaven*, not upon a new earth. The new heavens and new earth prophesied by Isaiah and John (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Rev. 21, 22) describe the world under the reigning Christ, who is seated at the right hand of God and governs the nations.

for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

The prophets came under persecution because they denounced the sins and crimes of the people and rulers. The church is called to follow their example that it may share in their reward. If the world does not oppose us, then surely our message and witness have been compromised.

13 - Ye are the salt of the earth:

The properties of salt are such that it serves both as a seasoning and preservative. The saints make the world palatable to God and lend it savor in his mouth. Though proportionately few, they serve to preserve the world similar to Sodom and Gomorrah, which God would have spared if but ten righteous had been found in them (Gen. 18:32).

but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

Salt is a mineral and will retain its savor indefinitely unless exposed to contamination or impurities. In Palestine at the time of our Lord, salt was not mined or obtained by evaporating clean salt water, but from marshes (Ezk. 47:11),

¹ Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, XXIV; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VII, p. 219

and from salt lakes that dried up in summer, and from the south end of the Dead Sea. The manner of gathering salt meant that it sometimes contained impurities, which caused it to lose its savor. Once its savor is lost, there was no process by which it could be restored.

it is thenceforth good for nothing,

This is similar to the warning to the church of Laodicia, in which the Lord said he would that they were hot or cold, but because they were luke-warm, would spew them from his mouth (Rev. 3:15, 16). Hot water has therapeutic value; cold water will quench thirst. But tepid water is suitable for nothing and men spew it from their mouths. So with salt: Salt that has lost its savor is useless. However, it is not entirely inert, but will render sterile any land that it is cast upon. Hence, Luke reports the Lord’s saying with the addition “It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill” (Lk. 14:35).

but to be cast out,

Although not spoken as a prophecy or prediction of the destruction of the Jewish nation in A.D. 70, yet, it is impossible to ignore this aspect of Christ’s speech. At a time when the leaders of the Jews were lying in wait for his words to accuse him, the centurion showed great faith, causing Jesus to remark

“Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matt. 8:10-12

Similarly, in his allegory of Abraham’s two wives, Paul equated Sarah and Hagar with the two covenants; believers born after the Spirit he equated with Isaac; unbelieving Jews born after the flesh he equated with Ishmael. As Ishmael had persecuted Isaac, so unbelieving Jews were

persecuting Christians. However, Paul concluded with the words of Sarah, saying, “*cast out the bond woman and her son*” (Gal. 4:21-31; cf. Gen. 2:10). The Jews’ possession of the land was conditional and provisional: it was conditioned upon obedience to the law and the word of the Lord; it was provisional as a measure to preserve a righteous seed in the earth until Christ could come into the world and the gospel go forth to all nations. The Jews rejected Christ and were thus rejected themselves and suffered divine vengeance and wrath.

and to be trodden under foot of men.

Unfit for any other use, salt that has lost its savor was cast into the street, where it was trodden under foot by man. This was the predicted end of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation:

“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof nigh...and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Lk. 21:20, 24; cf. Rev. 11:2

14 - Ye are the light of the world.

Light is a metaphor for knowledge, understanding, and truth. But as all true knowledge leads to goodness, light is also a metaphor for righteousness and holiness. Thus, sin bespeaks spiritual ignorance, wickedness and darkness, but light bespeaks holiness and truth. Hence, John says “*God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*” (1 Jn. 1:5; cf. 1 Tim. 6:16). But as regards men, Paul says “*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light*” (Eph. 5:8; cf. Phil. 2:14, 15). Jesus is the true light that came into the world (Jn. 1:4-9; 8:12). Disciples are but reflections of the light that emanates from Christ. The faith and moral qualities of the disciples pronounced by the beatitudes – the poor in spirit, those that mourn for sin, the meek, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the

merciful, the pure of heart, the peacemakers, those persecuted for righteousness sake – are derived from God and shine like light in the world of men, showing them the way to live and to walk. If this light is repressed or removed, the world would quickly devolve into all manner of sin and darkness.

A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

The image of a city set atop a hillside would have been familiar to Jesus’ audience. Anciently, cities were built on hills because high ground is more easily defended, giving them a necessary advantage against attack. The association of nations and cities with mountains and hills led the prophets to use the one to refer to the other. “*For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon ...all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower and upon every fenced wall*” (Isa. 2:12-15). God’s people are a spiritual city. The church, the bride of Christ, is the new Jerusalem, the covenantal habitation of the saints, which came down out of heaven from God (Rev. 2, 9, 10). It is founded upon spiritual Zion, the New Testament, where all the world may see it, and all whomsoever will may flow into its gates (Rev. 22:25, 26; Isa. 2:1-5). Christ’s point here is that as light shines for men to see, and as a city on a hill is visible a great way off, so his disciples ought to be clearly visible to the world, set apart by the testimony of their lives and their word.

15 - Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

This was a common saying of the Lord, and occurs several times in other contexts (Mk. 4:21; Lk. 8:16; 11:33). Men do not light a candle or lamp, only to cover or conceal it, for this would defeat its very purpose. In Revelation, the churches are called candlesticks or lampstands (Rev. 1:20); Christ threatened to take away the candlestick of the church at Ephesus for having grown complacent and having left its first love and good works (Rev. 2:5). Thus, like salt that has lost its savor, light that does not shine has no purpose and will be extinguished. The disciples

are to be lamps, kindled by the word and Spirit in their hearts, shining knowledge of Christ and of God in the world.

16 - Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

As parents are glorified by their children, so God is glorified by men and women whose lives and conduct make them lights in the world. Light dispels darkness. Christians are called to *separation and non-conformity*. Where Christians become too acculturated to the world around them, blending imperceptibly with unbelievers, assuming the same habits of fashion and dress, pursuing the same goals and objects, their light is concealed and will go out. Christ thus urges disciples to so trim their lamps that they may brightly shine, and God may receive glory because of them.

17 - Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

Jesus' ministry was marked by confrontation with the religious leaders of the day, by overthrowing the tables of the money-changers and those that sold in the temple (Jn. 2:13-17), and accusations that he broke the law by healing on the Sabbath, and failed to keep the tradition of the elders (Jn. 5:16; *cf.* Matt. 12:2, 10, 14; 15:1-9). Moreover, it was popularly believed that the coming of the Messiah would signify profound changes in the covenantal institutions of God's people. God told Moses

"I will raise them up a Prophet, from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth: and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." Deut. 18:18, 19

That the Prophet would be like Moses implied that he would be a *law-giver* who would initiate

new political and religious institutions. Thus, the prophet Jeremiah foretold the time when God would make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel and Judah (Jer. 31:31-34). Jesus followers must have been concerned regarding his attitude toward the law, which he therefore now addresses.

The "law," refers to the Pentateuch, or the five books of Moses; the "prophets," refers to the balance of the Old Testament canon, including the books of history, wisdom, poetry, and Psalms. Jesus tells the disciples he has not come to *destroy* the law and the prophets. The Greek word translated "destroy" here is *καταλυσαι*, and carries the idea of *wrecking*. The same word occurred at Jesus' trial, when false witnesses accused Jesus of saying he would destroy (*καταλυσω*) the temple, and rebuild it in three days (Mk. 14:58). This word occurs again regarding the charge against Stephen for teaching that Jesus would destroy (*καταλυσει*) the temple and Jerusalem and change the customs delivered to the Jews by Moses (Acts 6:14, 15). This should be compared to the Greek term *καταργεο*, which means to annul or bring to naught (I Cor. 15:24, 26; II Tim. 1:10). The law and the prophets, including especially the priesthood and temple service, were provisional and could make nothing salvationally perfect (Heb. 7:19); they were prophetic types and foreshadows pointing to the cross of Calvary (Col. 2:16, 17; Heb. 10:1); a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). Jesus came to fulfill the law's demand by his substitutionary death and atoning sacrifice. The debt of sin thus paid, the mortgage and evidence of our debt was "blotted out" (Col. 2:13, 14), and the law annulled (Eph. 2:15), not wrecked or destroyed. It is the difference between destroying what has not yet met its purpose, and cancelling or retiring that which has.

18 - For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

The prophets often use the "heavens and earth" figuratively to refer to nations and peoples,

thrones and dominions. Haggai, who is quoted in the epistle to the Hebrews regarding the time of world-judgment that witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 66-70, described the day of the Lord, saying

“Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations...and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen.” Hag. 2:6, 7, 22; cf. Joel 2:10,28-32; Acts 2:17-21)

On this basis, some have inferred that the “heavens and earth” in Matthew here are a cryptic reference to the fall of Jerusalem. However, this is clearly wrong. Jesus does not use the “heavens and earth” cryptically or eschatologically. Rather, he uses them *emphatically* and *parabolically*. The heavens and earth are most enduring and unalterable of all physical creation. Stars fall from the sky; seasons change; a generation comes and goes, but *“the earth abideth forever”* (Ecc. 1:4). An example of affirming the immutability of one thing by comparing it to the heavens occurs in Jeremiah. Just before the Jews were carried into Babylonian captivity, God promised he would not abandon his people forever, and underscored the reliability of this promise by evoking the ordinances of the sun, moon, and stars:

“Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of hosts is his name. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever.” Jer. 31:35, 36

But if the heavens and earth are faithful and enduring, God’s word is more certain and abiding still: *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”* (Matt. 24:35; cf. 1 Pet. 1:24, 25). Thus, when Jesus says

“till heaven and earth pass” he is affirming the immutability of the law and prophets, saying, not the least tittle – the stroke that crosses a “t” – or one jot – the dot above the “i” – would pass from the law except it first be fulfilled. That this is the meaning is made clear from the parallel saying in Luke: *“And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail”* (Lk. 16:17). The law was fulfilled and taken out of the way at the cross (Col. 2:14, 15; Eph. 2:15; Rom. 7:1-4; Heb. 7:12). Prophecies regarding Christ’s resurrection, the out-pouring of the Holy Ghost, the spread of the gospel, the destruction of Jerusalem, and heaven’s wrath upon the Roman Empire, were of an independent vitality and province, and were fulfilled in their own time.

19 - Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

The law was of such importance that a man’s relationship to it would affect the esteem in which he would be held in heaven. Those who were scrupulous to obey the smallest commandment of the law, and who taught others to do likewise by their example, would be had in great estimation; those who abrogated even the smallest commandment, and taught others by word or deed to do the same, would be held in small esteem. That men guilty of breaking the law would be in heaven, shows that grace, not merit, governs their salvation. Salvation might be affected by wanton or intentional violations of commands great and small, but small departures made unwittingly in good-faith most often would not. Man can serve God with a perfect heart but be mistaken in many points of practice and doctrine and still be saved. St. Paul says the same when he wrote:

“Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be

revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." I Cor. 5:12-15

20 - For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The term "scribe" was originally given to court officials during the monarchy who served as secretaries of state (II Sam. 8:17; II Kng. 12:19; 18:18). Following the captivity, the title was called upon men like Ezra, who were teachers of the law (Ezra 7:6; Neh. 8:1). In the New Testament, scribes were also called lawyers, or rabbi, and were almost invariably of the sect of the Pharisees. The Pharisees grew up in the inter-testamental period, during Greek dominion of Palestine. Josephus first mentions them in the time of Jonathan Maccabeus.² Josephus differentiates them from the Sadducees chiefly by their insistence upon keeping the oral tradition of the elders:

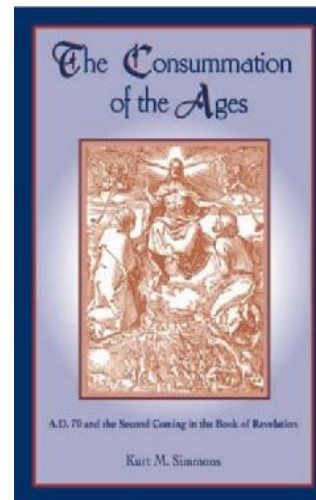
"The Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observations by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the law of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers."³

Jesus denounced the scribes and Pharisees, calling them hypocrites, the offspring of vipers, and sons of Gehenna, who devoured widows'

² Josephus, *Ant.* 13.5.9

³ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.10.6; Whiston ed.

houses, and for pretense made long prayers and loved to pray standing on street corners, where they might be seen of men. They were Jesus' greatest opponents and orchestrated his death, and became the chief persecutors of the saints. Jesus therefore pronounced seven "woes" upon them and Jerusalem, saying that the blood of all the martyrs, from Abel unto Zachariah the son of Barachiah, would be required of that generation in the wrath that was poured upon Jerusalem and the Jews. To avoid their fate, the disciples were called to serve God with a pure heart, fervently.



The Consummation of the Ages

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A.D. 70 and the Second Coming in the Book of Revelation

The Consummation of the Pre-Messianic Age and the Parousia of Christ

Excerpts from Biblical Apocalypics

by

Milton S. Terry

(A.D. 1898)

It remains to notice a few things peculiar to Matthew's report of this discourse of Jesus. According to his gospel the form of the disciples' question was, "When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming (parousia) and of the consummation of the age (sunteleia tou aionos)?" They seem to have already inferred or assumed that his coming and the consummation of the age would be connected in some way with the desolation of the temple. The closing words of chap. xxiii were of a nature to imply all this [1] If it were not to be, and Jesus knew it, it is inconceivable that he should have confirmed them in such a belief as the language of Matt. xxiv was certainly adapted to do. What significance, then, are we to attach to the words coming, and consummation of the age?

The words parousia, commonly translated coming, is so constantly associate, in current dogmatics, with the ultimate goal of human history, that ordinary readers lose sight of its simple meaning in New Testament usage. The word means presence as opposed to absence. For example, we read in Phil. ii,12, "Sop then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence (en te parousia mou) only, but now much more in my absence (en te apousia mou), work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." But as the personal presence of any one implies a previous coming, so this word is not improperly rendered coming in many passages, and the verb erchomai, to come, is often employed to denote the appearance and kingdom of Christ. [2] Bt to assume that this coming or presence of Christ must needs be spectacular in any physical sense, a literal display of his person in the atmosphere of this earth, is to involve the doctrine in

great confusion. Why must the coming of the Son of man on the clouds to execute judgment on that

generation be understood or explained in any other way than we explain Jehovah's "riding upon a swift cloud," and coming to execute judgment on Egypt, as prophesied in Isa. xix,1? Whatever the real nature of the parousia, as contemplated in this prophetic discourse, our Lord unmistakably associates it with [p. 245] the destruction of the temple and city, which he represents as the signal termination of the pre-Messianic age. The coming on clouds, the darkening of the heavens, the collapse of the elements, are, as we have shown above, familiar forms of apocalyptic language, appropriated from the Hebrew prophets. [3]

That other expression in Matthew, "the consummation of the age," is a phrase that has been much abused and widely misunderstood. The common translation, "end of the world," has been a delusion to many readers of the English Bible. It has helped to perpetuate the unscriptural notion that the coming and kingdom of Christ are not facts of the past, present, and future, but of the future only. The fundamental and distinguishing doctrine of all branches of the "Adventists," so-called, is that the coming of the Son of man to set up his kingdom in this world is solely an event of the future. Christ has as yet no kingdom among men! Even the parables of our Lord, illustrative of the spiritual character of the kingdom, are forced to harmonize with the concept of a spectacular advent and a political organization. [4] Those who maintain the doctrine, and, indeed, not a few who oppose it, fall into error and inconsistency by failing to apprehend the true meaning of the phrase "the end of the age."

For, first of all, they do not determine clearly what age (aion) is contemplated in such a text as Matt. xxiv,3. They quite generally assume that the period of the Gospel dispensation is meant. But nothing is more familiar in the Jewish terminology of our Lord's time than the current phrases this age and the age to come. The period which preceded the coming of the Messiah [p. 246] was spoken of as this age; that which followed his coming was the age to come.[5] It is not important to consider what various and often contradictory notions the rabbins associated with the age to come. Their notions were as various as those concerning the character of the Messiah himself. But by this age they meant and could mean nothing else than the current period in which they were living, the then present age. The question of the disciples, as recorded, could therefore only refer to the pre-Messianic age, and its consummation was, as we have seen, associated in their thought with the overthrow of the temple. But even were it admitted that their notion of the "consummation of the age" was erroneous, the teaching of Jesus was emphatic beyond all rational question that that generation should not pass away before all those things of which they inquired should be fulfilled.

The age to come, the Messianic time, would accordingly be the period that would follow immediately after the termination of the pre-Messianic age. That time had not yet come when Jesus spoke. According to the whole trend of New Testament teaching that age and the Messianic kingdom were near or at hand. Christ's ministry fell in the last days of an aion. The gospel of his kingdom must be firmly established in the world before the end of that age. The gospel of his kingdom must be firmly established in the world before the end of that age. So we read, in Heb. ix, 26: "Now, once, at the end of the ages (epi sunteleia ton aionon) hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Also in Heb. i, 1, it is written: "God...hath at the last of these days spoken unto us in his Son." Similarly Peter (1 Pet. i, 20) speaks of Christ as "foreknown before the foundation of the world, but manifested at the end of the times for your sake." Paul, too, speaks of himself as living near the consummation of an age: "These things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Cor. x,11) The ministry both of Jesus and his disciples must, therefore, be recognized as occurring in the latter days of an aion, or near the end of the pre-Messianic age. The New Testament writers, as well as Jesus, are clear on this point. They never represent themselves as already entered upon the first days, or the beginning of the age, but rather in the last days.

If, now, we ask with the disciples, WHEN shall these things be? or at what point are we to recognize the end

of the pre-Messianic age? we are to find the answer in the eschatological discourse of [p. 248] Jesus, and at some point before that generation passed away. "The ends of the ages" may have a definite point of contact and transition from one age to another. The coming age may, like the morning twilight, cast its beams into the foregoing night, and so the preceding age may partake in its last days of many things which belong to the age to come. [6] But such facts do not affect the question of the signal crisis which may conspicuously mark the end of one age and the opening of another. Was there such a crisis between the Jewish and Christian dispensations, that we can point to it and say, "That was preeminently and conspicuously an event which marked an epoch in the history of both Judaism and Christianity?"

Some writers find such a crisis or end in the crucifixion of Jesus, and the moment when he said, "It is finished." (tetelestai). Others say it was at the resurrection; some few designate the ascension; but many have taught that the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the coming of Christ in his kingdom, the end of the old and the beginning of the new age. To all of these theories there are two insuperable objections: (1) They are irreconcilable with the statement of Jesus that the Gospel must first be preached "in all the habitable earth" (oikoumene), and (2), long after the day of Pentecost, the apostles speak of their work as taking place in the last days, or near the end of the age.

Is it not strange that any careful student of our Lord's teaching should fail to understand his answer to this very question? The disciples asked, definitely, WHEN shall it be? And Jesus proceeded to foretell a variety of things which they would live to see - all preliminary to the end. He foretold the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem, and an intelligible sign by which they might know the imminence of the final catastrophe of Judaism. And having told them of all these things, and of his own coming in the clouds and its glorious significance, he added: "When ye see these things coming to pass, know that it is nigh, at the door. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away until all these things be accomplished." The ruin of the temple was, accordingly, the crisis which marked the end of the pre-Messianic age. [p. 249]

Matthew's gospel appends to the eschatological discourse three parables of admonition, which occupy the whole of the twenty-fifth chapter. The parable of the ten virgins and the picture of the judgment are peculiar to this gospel, but the parable of the talents appears to be in substance identical with that of the pounds (mnas, minas) in Luke xix, 11-27. The three parables as they stand in Matthew, whether originally uttered in this connection or not, are every way

appropriate to the context. They are admonitions to watch and be ready for the coming of the Lord, and are not essentially different from the counsels already noticed in the fourth section of the preceding discourse (for example, Matt. xxiv, 32-51). The lesson of the parable of the virgins is, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." The great lesson of the parable of the talents is that the Lord's servants have also something more to do than merely to watch. They must be diligently employed in the service and interests of their owner during his temporary absence from them, whether the time be long or short. There is, then, no difficulty as to the import of these parables, and no question as to their relevancy to the subject of which Jesus spoke on the Mount of Olives.

Greater difficulty is supposed to attach to the sublime picture of Judgment recorded in Matt. xxv.31-46, and most expositors have thought that the picture must needs refer to a general and formal judgment of all nations of men at the conclusion of human history. But the language of Matthew is explicit in referring it to the time "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him," and when "he shall sit on the throne of his glory." There would be obvious inconsistency in making this coming of the Son of man different from that of Matt. xxiv, 30, and xvi, 27,28. How, then, it is asked, can this sublime ideal be brought within the time-limits of the prophecy of Matt. xxiv?

The difficulties which are here suggested arise either from the assumptions of a literalizing exegesis or from a failure to keep in mind that the coming and kingdom of Christ are in their nature a process, which has definite historical beginning, but stretches on indefinitely into future ages of ages. Consequently, while most of the things enumerated in the foregoing discourse had fulfillment in the fall of Judaism and the beginning of Christianity, other things, from their very nature, are such as must needs be of repeated or continual occurrence. Such especially is the execution of judgment, a function of every reigning king. The scriptural doctrine of Messiah's reign is not that God, the father Almighty, vacates his throne at the accession of Christ. Neither the concept of Psalm ii, [p. 250] 7-9, nor Psalm cx, nor Dan. vii, 13,14, implies that the eternal God is any less the ruler and sovereign of the world after he sets his anointed Son at his right hand, and "gives him dominion and glory and a kingdom." From thence onward he judges the world by Jesus Christ, and the sublime picture of Matt. xxv, 31-46, is a parable of this great fact. Hence the force and propriety of the words: When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory." But how long he shall continue to sit thus on his glorious throne of

judgment - how long "he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet" - is not a matter of specific revelation. The ideal of judgment presented in Matt. xxv, 31-46, is therefore no single event, like the destruction of Jerusalem. It is not to be explained literally as a formal assize not to open until the end of human history on earth. It is, rather, a most impressive parabolic picture of the age-long administration of Jesus Christ, from the hour of the signal overthrow of Jerusalem until "he shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father" (1 Cor. xv, 24). the anointed King of glory is judge of the living as well as of the dead, and it is a grave error to represent "the day of the Lord" or "the day of judgment" as something deferred to the end of time. We have shown over and over again in the preceding portions of this volume that "the great and terrible day of the Lord " is a prophetic phrase of remarkable fullness of meaning. The Old Testament doctrine is that "the kingdom is Jehovah's, and he is ruler among the nations" (Psalm xxii, 28). "Say ye among the nations, Jehovah reigneth; he shall judge the peoples with equity. he cometh, he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his truth" (Psalm xcvi, 10-13. The day of judgment for any wicked nation, city, or individual is the time when the penal visitation comes; and the judgment of God's saints is manifest in every signal event which magnifies goodness and condemns iniquity.[7] [p. 251]

But this divine administration of the world, which in the Hebrew Scriptures is the work of Jehovah, is portrayed in Dan. vii, 13,14, and represented in the New Testament as committed unto Christ. The Father has given him "authority to execute judgment because he is Son of man" (John v, 27). And the Son of man came, in accord with the apocalyptic picture of Dan. vii, 13, and Matt. xxiv, 30, and executed judgment upon Jerusalem, guilty of "all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of Able the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah" (Matt. xxiii, 35,36). That was the first conspicuous exhibition of his judicial power, and it marked the crisis and end of the pre-Messianic age. Christ is, therefore, now King and Judge; but all things are not yet subjected unto him, and he must reign until he shall have put all things in subjection under his feet. And this no other than the decree,

Jehovah has said to me, My Son art thou; I have this day begotten thee. Ask from me, and I will give nations for thine inheritance, And for thy possession the ends of the earth Psalm ii, 7,8.

We conclude, then, that the additions peculiar to Matthew's version of our Lord's discourse on the Mount of Olives contain nothing inappropriate to the

occasion, and nothing inconsistent with the definite time-limit of the prophecy and the analogy of New Testament eschatology. [p. 252]

Notes

(Editor's note: the following notes appeared at the foot of the page where they are cited and should be referenced accordingly.)

[1] "the disciples assume as a matter of course," says Meyer, "that immediately after the destruction in question the Lord will appear, in accordance with what is said in xxiii, 39, for the purpose of setting up his kingdom, and that with this the current (the pre-Messianic) era of the world's history will come to an end." - Critical and Exegetical Handbook on Matthew, in loco.

[2] Comp. Matt xvi, 27,28; xxiv, 30; xxv, 31; John xiv, 3; Rev. 1, 7; xxii, 7.

[3] Acts i, 11, is often cited to show that Christ's coming must needs be spectacular, "in like manner as ye beheld him going into the heaven." But (1) in the only other three places where on tropon, what manner, occurs, it points to a general concept rather than the particular form of its actuality. Thus, in Acts vii, 28, it is not some particular manner in which Moses killed the Egyptian that is notable, but rather the certain fact of it. In 2 Tim. iii, 8, it is likewise the fact of strenuous position in Matt. xxiii, 37, and Luke xiii, 34, it is the general thought of protection rather than the visible manner of a mother bird that is intended. Again (2), if Jesus did not come in that generation, and immediately after the great tribulation that attended the fall of Jerusalem, his words in Matt. xvi, 27,28, xxiv, 29, and parallel passages are in the highest degree misleading. (3) To make the one statement of the angel in Acts i, 11, override all the saying of Jesus on the same subject and control their meaning is a very one-sided method of biblical interpretation. but all the angel's words necessarily mean is that as Jesus has ascended into heaven so he will come from heaven. And this main thought agrees with the language of Jesus and the prophets.

[4] See, for example, the excursus of Dr. E.R. Craven on the Basileia in the American edition of Lange's Commentary on the Revelation of John, pp. 93-100.

[5] See Schurer, History of Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, English translation, vol. ii, p. 177; Schoettgen, Horae Hebraicae, i., 1153-1158.

[6] And so we should note that many things which Jesus spoke by way of counsel and admonition are as

applicable to one period as another. The exhortation to watch, which having a special historical motive and force with the disciples, has its abiding lesson as one of the things ever incumbent upon the servants of the heavenly King. So many particular exhortation and counsels of Old Testament prophets have permanent value. It is in this way that the scriptures of both Testaments are profitable for instruction in righteousness.

[7] We need not assume to say how far and in what manner Christ executes his judgments or gathers his elect by the ministry of angels. He who "makes the clouds his chariot, who walks upon the wings of the wind, making his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire" (Psalm civ, 3,4; comp. Heb 1, 7), is present in all the great crises of this world's history, and he makes his angels ministering spirits to serve such as are to inherit salvation (Heb. 1,14). Our Lord represented Lazarus as carried away (apevexthenai) by the angels into Abraham's bosom (Luke xvi, 22). But there is no warrant in Scripture for the notion that when the angels are sent forth on missions of mercy or of judgment their operations must needs be visible to mortal eyes. When the impious Herod Agrippa allowed himself to be honored as a god, "immediately an angel of God smote him, and, becoming eaten of worms, he breathed out his spirit" (Acts xii, 22,23). Human eyes saw nothing but the curse of a foul disease, or a terrible plague; but Scripture sees back of it the potent ministry of a destroying angel (comp. Exod. xii, 23; 2 Sam. xxiv, 16). So the visible effects of divine judgment were terribly manifest in the unparalleled miseries of Jerusalem. The righteous blood of unnumbered martyrs was visited upon that generation (Matt. xxiii, 35,36); and where the Jewish historian saw and made record of appalling tribulation and woe the word of prophecy discerned a "revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with the angels of his power [personal or natural] in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel" (2 Thess. 1, 7,8). In like manner the King of glory is continually judging and reigning among the nations, and he will not cease from his age-long work until " he shall have abolished all rule and authority and power" (1 Cor. . xv, 24).same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Jewish Captives in the Imperial City

Arch of Titus and Colosseum Detail Destruction of Jerusalem Temple

Biblical Archaeology Review

Ancient Rome was the superpower of its day. Yet, when the Romans conquered the tiny province of Judea and quashed the First Jewish Revolt in 70 C.E., it was actually a pretty big deal.

BAR readers are familiar with the Judea Capta coins issued by the emperors to celebrate the Roman victory over the Jews, but new projects are shining a light on some of Rome's most famous monuments and the important role of the defeated Jews in the distant city.

Restoration work was set to begin in December on the iconic Colosseum, Rome's first all-stone amphitheater, which could seat upwards of 50,000 spectators for its gladiatorial bouts, animal hunts and mock naval battles. The work, expected to conclude in mid-2015, will include the cleaning and restoration of the familiar arcaded façade, the creation of a services center, and the restoration of numerous galleries and underground spaces.



The Colosseum has been so called since at least the eighth century C.E., in reference to a colossal statue of the notorious emperor Nero that stood nearby. In fact, the original name of the structure was the Flavian Amphitheater, after the emperors of the Flavian dynasty who built it in the late first century C.E.—Vespasian, Titus and Domitian. (The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus took the emperor's family name when he came under the patronage of Vespasian.)

As demonstrated in a **BAR** article by Louis H. Feldman, a hidden inscription on the Colosseum itself suggests that the construction of the amphitheater was financed by the plundered booty from the Jewish

Revolt. Vespasian faced a serious deficit when he became emperor, but the spoils of war from Judea—the riches of the Temple treasury, the golden vessels from the Temple, the seized personal treasures of Jewish citizens and the sale of the Jewish captives themselves—provided enormous wealth for the emperor and the plundering army commanded by his son Titus. Thus did the conquest of Judea fund the most recognizable structure of imperial Rome.

These same plundered spoils of Judea are depicted prominently on another monument that still stands in Rome, which is the focus of exciting new research. The marble Arch of Titus was built in 81 C.E. by the emperor Domitian to commemorate the victory and triumphal parade of his brother Titus, the conquering army general, and Emperor Vespasian's son and successor. A recent project of the Yeshiva University Center for Israel Studies (in partnership with the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma) undertook a new study of the main relief panels on the arch, which show the triumphal parade of 71 C.E. and the deification of Titus.



In the most famous of the panels, Roman soldiers carry the Jerusalem Temple spoils on parade, including the menorah, the showbread table and trumpets, which

were then deposited in Rome's Temple of Peace. This panel and the others were recently subjected to high-resolution three-dimensional scans, resulting in stunningly crisp, high-quality images of the relief that are accurate within less than a millimeter and are free from the distracting visual distortions of the marble's age and discoloration.



The menorah was also tested for trace paint colors. The resulting discovery of yellow ochre on its arms and base is consistent with Biblical and first-century descriptions of the Temple's golden menorah. In the next phase of the project, the team will test for paint traces on the rest of the arch.

According to project director Steven Fine of Yeshiva University, they plan to create a full-size three-dimensional color model of the arch's menorah panel for display at the university museum in 2014.

Great Preterist Quotes

John Samuel Thompson (1823) "This prophecy fixes the time of Christ's coming before the destruction of the second temple, which by the Romans under Vespasian, was levelled with the ground." (Prophecy Fulfilled Or Destruction of Jerusalem and Dispersion of the Jewish People at the Second Coming of Christ: Delineated in a Discourse from 2 Thess. I. 6,10, Delivered at Rochester, N.Y., Nov. 24th, 1823)

N.T. Wright - "Paul here reflects the early Christian tradition, going back to Jesus himself, according to which Jerusalem was to be destroyed, and according to which that destruction was to be interpreted as the wrath of God against his sinful people. In the same Thessalonian correspondence, Paul asserted that the wrath of God had indeed come upon them 'to the uttermost' (1 Thess.2:16.) It is this awareness of an imminent end to the way the Jewish world had looked for so long, rather than an imminent end to the space-

time universe, that drove Paul on his mission with such urgency. From his own point of view he lived in an odd interim period: judgment had been passed on Jerusalem, but not yet executed. There was a breathing space, a 'little time' in which people could repent, and in which the message of Jesus could spread to Gentiles as well as Jews (though it always remained, for Paul, 'to the Jew first'). When Jerusalem fell, Jews on the one hand would undoubtedly blame those who had reneged on their Jewish responsibilities, including those Jewish Christians who, like Paul, had been enjoying fellowship with pagans and regarding it as the Kingdom of God and the true expression of the covenant God made with Abraham." (Jerusalem in the New Testament, p 11)

F.F. Bruce on Hebrews 9:11 - But now Christ has appeared as high priest of the good things which have come to pass // "The majority reading is "the good things that are to come", but the weight of the evidence favors "the good things that have come" (so P.46 B D* 1611 1739 2005 with the Syriac versions, Chrysostom, and Cyril of Jerusalem). "But now the time of reformation has arrived; what used to be "the good things to come" are now "the good things that have come" (RSV), "the good things already in being" (NEB). "For Christ has appeared, and in him the shadows have given way to the perfect and abiding reality. And his appearance is properly announced with a triumphant trumpet-flourish; his entrance into the presence of God is not a day of soul-affliction and fast, like the Day of Atonement under the old legislation, but a day of gladness and son, the day when Christians celebrate the accession of their Priest-King. "The combination of the oldest Greek and Latin with the Syriac evidence is in itself almost irresistible" in support of genomenon rather than mellonton (G. Zuntz, the Text of the Epistles [London, 1953, p. 119); the reading mellonton is probably due to the influence of 10:1. See p. 235." (The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 211)" (The Epistle to the Hebrews, p.211)

